



Date: August 21, 2003
Contacts: Linda Coates-Markle, 406-896-5223
Mary Apple, 406-896-5258

The Bureau of Land Management is planning to apply fertility control to both younger and older mares in the Pryor Mountain wild horse herd this summer for humane reasons.

Several years of monitoring have shown that young mares (two and three-year-olds) in the Pryor Mountain herd have been producing foals. In several cases, the demands of gestation and/or lactation have had unhealthy impacts on these young mares. Foal production in older mares (14 years of age and older) is limited but can result in mares in poor condition, early deaths, and orphaned foals. The practice of applying fertility control to select mares will help achieve and maintain a healthy and genetically-viable Pryor Mountain wild horse population.

BLM has selected 22 younger and older mares to receive a single-dose (primer) of Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) contraceptive vaccine with a follow-up booster at least one month later. This two-shot application is necessary as the primer dose simply acts to enhance the immune system response and does not generally confer infertility. The two doses of vaccine would induce only one year of infertility. Females scheduled to receive the vaccine include seven yearling fillies, eight two-year-old fillies, and seven 14-year-old or older mares.

--more--

All vaccine will be remotely delivered by certified and experienced darters. The BLM began vaccinating young females in the Pryor Mountain herd in 2001. Any horses which received a primer injection in 2002 will only receive the booster vaccine this year.

The BLM analyzed the proposed action in an environmental assessment (EA) this spring with the decision record being signed on June 19, 2003. The proposed fertility control implementation is scheduled to begin in mid-August. It is expected that most of the darting activity will be done by the end of September with efforts continuing until all selected mares are both primed and boosted.

###